

**Council on Postsecondary Education  
Committee on Equal Opportunities  
April 17, 2006**

**Requirement for High School Juniors to Take ACT**

Senate Bill 130 passed the Senate and is now in the House of Representatives for action. The bill amends KRS 158.6453 and will supplement, but not supplant, CATS by administering (free of charge) ACT tests in English, reading, math, and science to ALL Kentucky 11<sup>th</sup> graders as a component of high school accountability. Students who do not send their scores to colleges will be given WorkKeys assessments in reading for information, locating information, and applied mathematics. The three assessments will constitute the Kentucky Employability Certificate. Scores will be reported on student transcripts. These may replace redundant elements of CATS, but existing CATS assessment will be administered for areas of Kentucky Core Content that is not covered by ACT/WorkKeys. The implementation will begin in 2007-08.

The aim is to link postsecondary and workplace expectations with high school assessment standards so graduates are prepared for college or skilled employment, to make the ACT available to ALL Kentucky high school students free of charge, and to give students performance feedback in time for them to make their senior year productive.

The ACT is the instrument assessing skills and competencies that has meaning for, and is used by, postsecondary institutions—in Kentucky and elsewhere. Policy makers believe that:

- Administering the ACT in 11<sup>th</sup> grade gives students a chance to use their senior year wisely.
- Administering the ACT *universally* allows ALL students (even those who may have been “tracked out” of aspiring to college) a chance to see where they stand—and, we hopefully, raise their aspiration and preparation. *This is a critical equal opportunity issue.*
- Adding WorkKeys to the highschool assessment provides a relevant measure of achievement for employers.
- Using accountability measures in high school that are used by postsecondary institutions for admissions and placement purposes, and by employers in hiring decisions, will connect what is taught in high school with life beyond high school and will improve student preparation for successful transition.
- Including the ACT and WorkKeys for high school accountability will motivate students to take this assessment seriously: they know that it will “count” for them, especially if it appears on their transcript. They will work harder to do well—a frequently observed problem with highschool students and accountability measures.

Other states are looking at the same issues. For example, beginning next year, Wyoming plans to offer the ACT college entrance test to all high school juniors for free. Only about two-thirds of Wyoming students currently take the test, which is used by college admission offices to measure student preparedness. A Senate bill gives \$603,000 to the state superintendent of public instruction to arrange the free testing program. The state's Stan Hathaway Scholarship Program will offer scholarship money to qualified high school graduates who attend either the University of Wyoming or one of the state's community colleges beginning this fall. Under the state's ACT program, the test will be offered to juniors at every Wyoming high school. Students may also choose to take the WorkKeys test, which measures job skills, to secure a Hathaway Career Scholarship at a community college. Colorado and Illinois currently offer the ACT test to all students, but not as a part of a scholarship program. Those states offer the test to measure student learning.